

Article: Girl allowed to play football on Catholic team

By Seanna Adcox | *Associated Press*

An 11-year-old girl near Philadelphia won her crusade to play football for a Catholic Youth Organization team, after the city's archbishop reversed a boys-only rule.

Caroline Pla has played organized football since kindergarten, but was told last fall the no-girls rule would be enforced in her Bucks County league. She petitioned the archdiocese, leading to Thursday's decision from Archbishop Charles J. Chaput.



"It's a great step for the future of the church," said Caroline's mother, Marycecelia Pla of Doylestown. "Archbishop Chaput is starting with young girls, who are the future of the church, and I thank him for it."

"I didn't even really think the rule was going to be changed because of all the things that they said," said Caroline, who turns 12 on Wednesday. "Today is like double (excitement) for Catholics because now girls can play football and there's a new pope."

Pla had played CYO football for the past two seasons, apparently because the rule was overlooked. She had previously played on a Pop Warner team, and could have returned to that public league next year. However, she wanted to stay with friends and neighbors on her CYO "Romans" team.

She does not plan to play in high school because she probably won't be big enough to play tackle at that level. She is currently 5-foot-3 and 110-pounds, and made the all-star team last season.

The Women's Sports Foundation believes co-ed training and competition fosters mutual respect, and takes boys and girls out of what one former Olympian called "these straightjackets of gender roles."

"The civil rights laws protecting girls, minorities and the disabled are actually pretty good now," said Nancy Hogshead-Makar, a 1984 swimming gold medalist who is now a Florida law professor and senior director of advocacy for the foundation. "But what's missing is people willing to take a stand and insist on equal treatment for all."

She believes the publicity surrounding Pla's fight "makes it that much less likely that another school or sports league is going to do the same thing."

Claim:	Counterclaim:
Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence: